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ABSTRACT

A 37-item questionnaire was administered to 255 Chicago Hispanics to determine if Hispanics favor assimilation or pluralism or some state in between. Respondents included 23% Mexicans, 36% Puerto Ricans, 29% Cubans, and 11% South Americans. Of these, 33% were blue collar workers, 60% teachers, and 7% high school students. A total of 89% were born outside the United States. Data were analyzed by gender, marital status, and number of children in family. To determine the degree of assimilation, responses were categorized according to Gordon's seven stages of assimilation. Findings indicated that at least partial assimilation with social and political equality is the goal of the sample and that support for bilingual education and maintenance of cultural patterns will be sustained. Ethnic intermarriage and the desire to become American by the majority of the sample suggest a major step in the assimilation process. Findings suggested that, although acculturation is taking place, a certain degree of separateness (based on religion, ethnic identity, and behavioral patterns) exists and will be sustained in the future and that this will have particular significance for education in terms of school curriculum, bilingual programs, and desegregation of schools. (CM)

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HISPANIC IMMIGRANTS WANT TO BECOME AMERICANS,

BUT RETAIN THEIR ETHNIC IDENTITY

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BY

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Chicago, Illinois

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Absorption of minority cultures by the majority culture has been a powerful American social process. Becoming more American and less ethnic has been traditional for immigrants. Assimilation has been the rule, pluralism the exception.

Immigrant Hispanics appear to be changing this trend. Their influence in education (e.g. bilingual/bicultural education) and local politics is becoming significant in the 1980's. Their population increase of 61% to 14.6 million since 1970 (19 million counting "undocumented" Hispanic aliens) coupled with the cultural forces of language and religion appear to make Hispanics a political power to be dealt with in the 1980's. Their influence will depend on their desire to maintain their ethnicity or to assimilate. Do Hispanics favor assimilation or pluralism or some stage in between?

To answer this question, 255 Chicago Hispanics were surveyed (Chicago has 422,061 Hispanics or 14% of its population). The sample included 23% Mexicans, 36% Puerto Ricans, 29% Cubans and 11% South Americans (Bolivians, Ecuadorians, etc.). Thirty-three percent were blue collar workers, 60% teachers and 7% high school students. Only 1[illegible]% were born in the U.S., 18% in Mexico, 31% in Puerto Rico, 28% in Cuba, and 10% in South America. A total of 8[illegible]% were born outside the U.S. The data were also analyzed by

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gender, marital status and number of children in family.

To determine the degree of assimilation, Gordon's stages of assimilation were used: 1) Acculturation, 2) structural assimilation, 3) marital assimilation, 4) identificational assimilation, 5) attitudinal receptional assimilation, 6) behavioral receptional assimilation, and 7) civic assimilation.(1) The responses are categorized according to the assimilation stages in Table I. The sample was administered a 37-item questionnaire.

FINDINGS

The results showed the changes in their cultural patterns and movement toward assimilation were minimal. Although the majority (84%) liked America and believed Hispanic children should learn English (94%), they favored maintenance of Spanish (85%) and bilingual education (83%). In relation to decision-making in the Hispanic family, there appears to be an ambivalent shift from the strongly patriarchal (or lineal) to a democratic structure (65%) in which both parents made family decisions. Cubans were divided (48% yes, 45% no) on the issue of shared decision-making. There was no shift in cultural values in terms of ethnic diet (71%) and music (62%). And religion in Hispanic life was important (77%). Cooperativeness was favored over competitiveness by 71 percent of the sample. This is a reflection of the Hispanic "personalism", the reliance on networks of personal relations (e.g. family and extended family) rather than on impersonal social agencies and systems, as Americans do. This was supported by 72% who stated that helping one's family was more important than one's career. This included financial support (86%). The data also indicate that assimilation (absorption by majority culture) has not begun. Although the sample said they had good friends (81%) and would like to have more good friends (69%) of a different ethnic group, all (53%) and most (65%) of their best friends were Hispanics. Also 57 percent wished to return to their homeland. The only exceptions were Cubans (52%) who rejected the notion of returning and the sample born in the U.S. (34% yes, 38% no) who were ambivalent. Only 44 percent would and 37 percent would not move from the Hispanic community or island indicating an ambivalence to be assimilated into the large society. The results remained constance across all

independent variables.

Mass intermarriage (between ethnic/racial groups) is a definite indicator of assimilation. The responses show that 52 percent do not favor endogamy (marrying only members of its own ethnic group). But 57 percent would marry a Latino of a different ethnic group (e.g. Puerto Rican to a Cuban). The Mexican sample was divided on this question. What is more significant is that 58% would marry non-Hispanics, including the Mexican respondents. However, the willingness to marry a mate outside one's ethnic group, does not a marriage make. But it does indicate a trend toward assimilation. On the other hand, intermarriage may not mean assimilation, if not accepted by the majority society.

Another important factor of assimilation is the basis of one's identity. While the majority (54%) desired to become Americans, they wished to retain their ethnic identity. Seventy percent wanted to keep their Hispanic name and "be called by their ethnic" (66%) name (Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, etc.) rather than an anglo name. Fifty-one percent agreed to being called a Latin-American, but not American only (81%). Even the eleven percent sample born in the U.S., 81% did not wish to be called only Americans. The majority (66%) also felt that their culture and religion were an integral part of the Hispanic experience. It is apparent the sample's identity is based on their native culture.

On the other hand, 71 percent liked anglos and 69 percent were not prejudice against anglos. Neither did 72 percent discriminate nor feel discriminated against (53%) by anglos. The only exception were Puerto Ricans (51%) and Puerto Ricans born in Puerto Rico (52%) who felt that anglos dis-

criminated against them. (Thirty-six percent of the sample was Puerto Rican of which 90% was born in Puerto Rico.) In general, the Hispanic sample felt their was an absence of prejudice and discrimination.

In terms of civic assimilation (the absence of value and conflict based on ethnicity), the responses show that 62 percent felt that Hispanics must "fight for their rights in the U.S.". However 53 percent stated that political and economic interests were not the reasons for retaining one's ethnic identity. The rationale for this question is that it is reasoned that as native cultural characteristics are modified via acculturation, they become increasing symbolic as a vehicle for mobilizing their political, economic and social interests. Also ethnicity has become more salient (than e.g. social class) because it combines interest (political, economic, etc.) with an affective tie (religion, customs, etc.). Seventy-seven percent felt they had control over and freedom in their lives to "achieve" what they wished, supporting their contention of non-discrimination by the majority culture. Planning for the future (83%) appeared to be an integral cultural pattern for the sample, implying "delayed gratification" an essential characteristic for success in America.

The findings indicate, even with teachers, that at least partial assimilation is the goal of the sample. It appears that as the 1960s and 1970s were the decades for blacks, the 1980s will be the decade for Hispanics.

Political and social equality will be their goal. Maintenance of cultural patterns and support for bilingual education will be sustained, while wishing to fully participate in American society. Ethnic intermarriage and the

desire to become American by the majority of the sample suggest a major step in the assimilation process. Since 89 percent of the sample was first generation, many of the cultural patterns they presently wish to retain may become less important in the second generation. The findings suggest that although acculturation is taking place, a certain degree of separateness (based on religion, ethnic identity and behavioral patterns) exists and will be sustained in the future. This will have particular significance for education in terms of school curriculum, bilingual programs and desegregation of schools (e.g. predominantly Hispanic schools do not not wish to participate in Chicago public school's desegregation plan). To maintain a Hispanic pluralistic culture, either they must develop educational institutions to educate their offspring or maintain the Hispanic nature of the neighborhood public schools. Only the future will tell.

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1) Gordon, Milton, Assimilation in American Life., New York: Oxford Press, 1979.

TABLE I

RESPONSES OF ASSIMILATION SURVEY

I. ACCULTURATION (Changes of cultural patterns to those of host society, entrance on secondary group level.)

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Do you like America?	84	10	6
Is it important to speak good English?	88	8	4
Is it important that your or other Hispanic children learn English?	94	2	4
Should children maintain their language or learn Spanish?	85	7	8
Do you favor bi-lingual education in the schools?	83	11	6
Does the father (husband) make most decisions in the family?	52	37	11
Does the mother (wife) make most of the decisions in the family?	25	64	11
Do both husband and wife together make family decisions?	65	25	10
Is cooperation more important than competition in life and school?	71	18	11
Do you like your ethnic food better than American food?	71	20	9
Do you like your ethnic music better than American music?	62	32	6
Is it important for you to keep your religious belief?	77	16	7
Is your career (work) more important than helping your parents, brothers and sisters?	22	72	6
Do you feel responsible to help your mother, father, sister and brother with money if needed?	86	9	5

II. STRUCTURAL ASSIMILATION (Large scale entrance into cliques, clubs, institutions of host society, on primary group level.)

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Are all of your best friends Hispanic?	53	46	1
Are most of your best friends Hispanic?	65	33	2
Do you have good friends of other ethnic groups?	81	16	3
Would you like to have more good friends of a different ethnic group?	69	22	9
Do you wish to return to your homeland (country)?	57	33	10
Would you move away from the Hispanic neighborhood if you could?	44	37	19

III. MARITAL ASSIMILATION (Large scale intermarriage.)

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Would you marry only a Hispanic of your ethnic group?	34	52	16
Would you marry a Hispanic of a different ethnic group?	57	25	18
Would you marry someone who is not Hispanic?	58	23	19

IV. IDENTIFICATIONAL ASSIMILATION (Development of sense of peoplehood based exclusively on host society.)

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Do you wish to become American?	54	33	13
Would you like to have an Anglo rather than a Hispanic name?	20	70	10
Do you wish to be called a Hispanic (Mexican, or Puerto Rican or Cuban)?	66	26	8
Do you wish to be called a Hispanic American	51	40	9

IV. IDENTIFICATIONAL ASSIMILATION (cont'd)

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Do you wish to be called American only?	12	81	7
Being Hispanic is important because of its cultural and religious heritage?	66	18	16

V. ATTITUDINAL RECEPTIONAL ASSIMILATION (Absence of prejudice.)

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Are you prejudice against Anglos?	22	69	9
Do you like Anglos?	71	17	12

VI. BEHAVIORAL RECEPTIONAL ASSIMILATION (Absence of discrimination.)

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Do you discriminate against Anglos?	16	72	12
Do you feel discriminated against by Anglos?	36	53	11

VII. CIVIC ASSIMILATION (Absence of value and power conflict, based on ethnicity.)

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Being Hispanic is important because it means political and economic power?	25	53	22
Do you think Hispanic need to fight for their rights in American society?	62	20	18
Do you feel you can achieve what you wish?	77	11	12
Planning for the future is just as important as planning for the present?	83	10	7